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EROS AND *POLEMOS*: EROTICIZED COMBAT IN THE TROJAN WAR MYTH

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Abstract
The connections between belligerence and sexuality are well known to ethologists and anthropologists and have received some attention in literary analysis. This study examines the Trojan War, in the mythical matter itself and in its treatment by Homer, as a figurative amatory conquest. We note first the element of female eroticism in the background: the war begins with a beauty contest and Helen's abduction, and Homer's Iliad begins in a symmetrical pattern with a quarrel over desirable captive women. These events reflect a primal relationship between combat and access to females. But we also notice that the Trojan males are slightly feminized. Men of the royal line – Ganymede, Tithonus, Anchises, and Paris – are notable for beauty, and Ganymede becomes the passive object of Zeus' desire. Homer appears to emphasize this phenomenon in the battle scenes of the Iliad, which emphasize single combats that take on the character of aggressive courtships. Trojans die in far greater numbers, and are often depicted as passive victims of superior Greek masculinity. The beauty of the Trojan warriors is often described in feminine terms. They plead in the "soft words of maidens," they are slain and left stripped on the battlefield. The Trojan forces exhibit indiscipline and panic far more commonly than the Greeks. This tendency climaxes in the defeat of Hector, who likes his plight to that of an unclad defenseless woman or a lover (22.128-9), who flees in helpless terror and whose stripped body his Greek enemies admire after his death (22.367). We conclude that this archaic vision of warfare over connubial rights subsumes a strong homoerotic impulse wherein the defeat and domination of foemen has the nature of a sexual conquest, and killing figures as a negative procreation. This mentality seems limited to archaic combat dominated by duels, which can be understood as symbolic couplings, and it diminishes greatly in later periods.

Key Words: Homer, Iliad, Trojan War, duel, erotic, eros, Hector, Paris, Achilles, Ganymede.

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> *I think that periods of martial exaltation are essentially uranian (homosexual) periods, just as we see the belligerent peoples particularly inclined to homosexuality.*
>
> – André Gide, *Corydon*

A potent kinship between erotic and combative desire is natural to the human psyche; this is hardly a novel observation. Desire is one of the most frequent *casus belli* in the animal kingdom, and anthropologists tell us that the hope of capturing women often animates primitive war. So far this makes perfect evolutionary sense, but here the enemy and the desired object remain distinct – when we kill another male to win a female, it's a means to an end. Something less explicable seems to happen, though, in many depictions of battle, wherein the beloved or desired object and the enemy somehow become identified, and the defeat of a foeman takes on the character of an amatory conquest, an end in itself. This phenomenon of course tends to have a homoerotic character, as Gide notes in the epigraph above.

We're going to look at one example from Greek myth where this theme of martial and amorous conquest is especially prominent, the Trojan War cycle, and especially its most famous representation in Homer's Iliad. I'll assert at the beginning that Homer's work exhibits a interplay of erotic and belligerent themes, wherein the Trojans figure as passive victims of superior Greek manhood, and further that Homer seems to be making use of some tendencies in the entire Trojan mythical cycle, stretches well back before the Trojan war to the foundations of Troy and its ruling houses; it may be the only non-Greek city so honored. Themes of beauty and *eros* mark the early myths of Troy. Scions of the Trojan royal line are often gifted, or cursed, with a high degree of beauty and desirability, one well-known example being Ganymede, so lovely he roused the passion of Zeus himself, who carries him away to Olympus; the ancient depictions convey a strong a potent sense of sexual aggression. Another beautiful Trojan is Tithonus, who spurs the desire of Eos, the Dawn goddess, who carries him away to enjoy his favors, after which he wastes away in senescence. Ancient depictions likewise show him as a none too willing a partner; Rodin's version is insightful about his very passive role. In these two similar myths, then, beautiful Trojans serve almost as ciphers or receptacles receiving the lust of others, they undertake no action or decision and express no will.

When a mythical Trojan does have the opportunity to assert his will, the results are no less revealing. Many of you know that the origins of the Trojan War lie in the Judgment of Paris (or Alexander), the Trojan prince, handsomest of men who is entrusted to referee the goddesses' beauty contest. As incentives, Hera offers him worldly dominion, and Athena prowess in war, but Aphrodite the loveliest of women. Eschewing the manlier prizes that a Greek hero would have chosen, he opts for sensual pleasure. The one reference to the event in the Iliad does suggest that lust has robbed Paris of his wits:

> . . . ὥς σφιν πρῶτον ἀπήχθετο Ἴλιος ἱρὴ
> καὶ Πρίαμος καὶ λαὸς Ἀλεξάνδρου ἕνεκ' ἄτης,
> ὃς νείκεσσε θεὰς ὅτε οἱ μέσσαυλον ἵκοντο,
> τὴν δ' ἥνησ' ἥ οἱ πόρε μαχλοσύνην ἀλεγεινήν.

> Sacred Ilium was hateful to them, and Priam and his race, on account of the folly of Alexander, who scorned the goddesses when they came to his courtyard, and praised her (Aphrodite) who enabled his baneful lust.[1]

While today we might take this as a vigorous display of heterosexuality, this type of incontinence and this preference for indulgence over glory are un-Greek and hence unmanly. An ideal man pursues effort and honor over physical pleasure. The word *machlosyne* here, helpless lust, was actually considered an error by an ancient commentator, because it normally applies only to women, who were thought weaker in this regard. But that may be the point - the word accords with his characterization throughout the *Iliad*, where his temperament is distinctly womanish. When early in the poem he confronts Menelaus in single combat, the sight of his opponent causes him to turn tail immediately, and he is harshly rebuked by Hector:

> τὸν δ' Ἕκτωρ νείκεσσεν ἰδὼν αἰσχροῖς ἐπέεσσιν:
> Δύσπαρι εἶδος ἄριστε γυναιμανὲς ἠπεροπευτὰ
> αἴθ' ὄφελες ἄγονός τ' ἔμεναι ἄγαμός τ' ἀπολέσθαι:
> καί κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καί κεν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν
> ἢ οὕτω λώβην τ' ἔμεναι καὶ ὑπόψιον ἄλλων.
> ἦ που καγχαλόωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοὶ
> φάντες ἀριστῆα πρόμον ἔμμεναι, οὕνεκα καλὸν
> εἶδος ἔπ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι βίη φρεσὶν οὐδέ τις ἀλκή.
>
> Hector saw him and reproached him with shameful words: 'Ill-Paris, fairest in form, woman-crazy deceiver, you should have never been born, or died unwed. That is what I would wish, and that would be far better than to be a disgrace, despised by others. How the long-haired Achaians must laugh, saying that our chieftain is champion because of his fair form, but there is no strength in his mind nor any courage.'[2]

After Paris is shamed back into the fight, he soon finds himself worsted and being dragged away, Aphrodite spirits him away from danger, restoring him to his bedchambers and commanding Helen to attend upon him. Once again he is a victim to his desires: ὥς σεο νῦν ἔραμαι καί με γλυκὺς ἵμερος αἱρεῖ. 'How I desire you now, and how does sweet longing seize me!'[3] He makes love while Menelaus stalks the battlefield, a telling contrast.[4] This business of shirking war for love, even for that of a beautiful female, was felt to be in itself effeminate; Aeschylus, presenting another adulterous situation between Klytemestra and Aigisthos, later

wrote: γύναι, σὺ τοὺς ἥκοντας ἐκ μάχης μένων/ οἰκουρὸς εὐνὴν ἀνδρὸς αἰσχύνων ('Woman, you waited at home for the men coming back from battle, defiling the man's bed!').[5] *Machlosyne* in action. Thus Paris one of the representative Trojans, figures here as an emblematic softy, one who's vain over his looks and conquers women in bedchambers rather than men in battle.

Homer seems to have picked up on this strain of the Trojan character. Homer the poet treats the Trojans with considerable sympathy, but at a time when ethnic identity was coalescing, he also highlights the superior manhood of the Greeks at the expense of their Trojan victims – perhaps the start of the Greek-barbarian dichotomy which defined the latter as much softer creatures physically, morally, and intellectually.

Now, the role of woman as a catalyst for war has an extensive background presence in the Iliad; the war has begun with the abduction of Helen, and the Iliad itself beings with a fateful quarrel over female captives. But soon the focus is on male interaction. When the fighting gets underway in the Iliad, we note first that the Trojans exhibit a noisy emotional indiscipline associated with the fairer sex. Homer is careful to illustrate this point when the armies gather for the first time, Trojans screech like cranes and fowl, the Achaeans silent and breathing fury.[6] When they confront each other again before the massed battle, once again the Achaeans move in disciplined silence, here the Trojans are bleating like ewes; they're downgraded to females and helpless animals.[7]

We'll turn to the chief feature of the battle scenes, the single combats. I'll note at the outset that far more Trojans die that Greeks (the ratio is 4 or 5 to 1) and the imagery of dominance is much stronger on the Greek side, that of helplessness among the Trojans. Indeed, Homer imparts to the Trojan victims some characteristics and postures generally attributed to feminine behavior – panic, loss of wits, submission, and he does so in some strangely intimate diction.

I'll attempt to demonstrate all these points by example; so you don't have to take my word for it. Agamemnon rages on the battlefield in his aristeia, as book 11 is called, first killing two Trojan captains:

> . . .δάμασσε δέ μιν μεμαῶτα.
> καὶ τοὺς μὲν λίπεν αὖθι ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων
> στήθεσι παμφαίνοντας, ἐπεὶ περίδυσε χιτῶνας:

'Thus the king slew him in his rush. Then Agamemnon, lord of men, stripping them of their tunics, left them there, their breasts gleaming white'(11.98.100). The opening verb in this passage, *damasse*, is one often used for subjecting a maiden to one's will, domestically or sexually, though it just as often means generally to subdue by force. Agamemnon proceeds to strip them of their armor and tunics, a fine ancient custom very seldom suffered by Greeks in the Iliad, most despoiled bodies belong to Trojans. Commentators point out that it inflicts shame on the

defeated man, who is left there naked before all; here their bare chests gleam in the sun, a detail which an ancient scholiast says "reveals their youth," that is they have the smooth white flesh of youths and women, a mark of beauty. In fact Homer not uncommonly describes the beauty of defeated Trojans in somewhat feminine terms. It is not hard to see sexual hints in the despoilment of a youthful victim.

Moving along, Agamemnon accosts two royal sons, Isos and Antiphos, whose high birth brings them no glory here.[8] We hear that they had once been captured and their arms bound by Achilles, who then released them for ransom. The matter of ransoming captives is of course profitable to the captors and also forces the enemy into a posture of submission. So we first see them as captive and disempowered, and then their circumstances deteriorate as Agamemnon easily kills them and strips their splendid armor; Priam might as well have saved his ransom. The helplessness of these victims then expands through the whole Trojan host through a vivid simile, they panic as does that cannot save their fawns but flee away as the lion devours them. Note again that the Trojans in their terror are likened to hunted animals and females simultaneously; that's actually a rather frequent combination later in erotic poetry. Thus the emphasis on Achaean superiority here is very potent indeed.

Agamemnon is not through yet; he next meets up with the brothers Pisander and Antilochus. The latter is described as *menecharmen*, holding his ground or enduring in battle, but he's not proving it here; they have lost control of their horses and their wits, bereft of all power and dignity, and without offering resistance they immediately beg for mercy, submitting and offering a ransom, the motif we've just seen. Trojans are seen shocked out of their wits and/or pleading for mercy at regular intervals through the Iliad; the Achaeans never beg for mercy. There's nothing quite so bracing for one's manhood as a helpless victim groveling before you. Now this most miserable of conditions is one considered appropriate to a woman, as we see in a statement from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*:

> ὀχλεῖς μάτην με κῦμ᾽ ὅπως παρηγορῶν.
> εἰσελθέτω σε μήποθ᾽ ὡς ἐγὼ Διὸς
> γνώμην φοβηθεὶς θηλύνους γενήσομαι,
> καὶ λιπαρήσω τὸν μέγα στυγούμενον
> γυναικομίμοις ὑπτιάσμασιν χερῶν
> λῦσαί με δεσμῶν τῶνδε: τοῦ παντὸς δέω.
>
> You burden me in vain, exhorting me like a wave. Let it never enter your mind that I should fear Zeus' schemes and become woman-minded, and beg him whom I greatly hate with womanlike upturned hands to loose me from these bonds; this of all I shun.[9]

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In the Iliad, a Trojan plea is never efficacious; they plead with soft words and hear a hard answer, as Agamemnon politely refuses the offer and slaughters both. It's a very hard and brutal end, to have abased themselves to no purpose.

I hope I have shown here how many literary details Homer presses into service in order to depict a pitiless dominance of victor over vanquished . . . Could give many examples, but at this point I'll hazard the suggestion that the battle lust and impulsion for glory exhibited by the Greek warriors has some connection with erotic desire, the duels become metaphorical courtships or couplings and one might even say that the slaying of a Trojan foe is a sort of negative procreation, which gives birth to the victor's renown, his *kleos*.

By way of a crowning example, I'll show how these motifs are assembled in the death of Hector, the supreme Trojan defender. Hector's personal beauty is noted. Valiant he is, and yet in his climactic duel he proves no match for Achilles. He ponders negotiating first, before rejecting that alternative with these remarkable words:

> μή μιν ἐγὼ μὲν ἵκωμαι ἰών, ὃ δέ μ' οὐκ ἐλεήσει
> οὐδέ τί μ' αἰδέσεται, κτενέει δέ με γυμνὸν ἐόντα
> αὖτως ὥς τε γυναῖκα, ἐπεί κ' ἀπὸ τεύχεα δύω.
> οὐ μέν πως νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης
> τῷ ὀαριζέμεναι, ἅ τε παρθένος ἠΐθεός τε
> παρθένος ἠΐθεός τ' ὀαρίζετον ἀλλήλοιιν.
>
> I'll not approach him like a suppliant, for he will not pity me or show reverence, but kill me naked and like a woman, when I have taken off my armour. It is no time now to speak to him, from oak or rock, what a maiden and youth, yes, a maiden and youth, speak to each other![10]

We see here that a warrior who submits by taking off his armor thus becomes in effect a stripped woman, further when he offers to appease an enemy, he enters the position of a girl whispering to a lover; he's completely feminized. Hector has enough pride to push away the thought, but when he encounters Achilles he is reduced to fleeing for his life, and then indeed pleading with his foe: I beg you by your life, your knees, your parents (22.338). But as always such words are futile. Achilles kills and despoils the hated Hector, he indeed becomes stripped and defenseless, and the other Achaeans join in wondering at the beauty and development of his body, they spear him by turns, commenting how much softer he appears now:

> ἦ ῥα, καὶ ἐκ νεκροῖο ἐρύσσατο χάλκεον ἔγχος,
> καὶ τό γ' ἄνευθεν ἔθηχ', ὃ δ' ἀπ' ὤμων τεύχε' ἐσύλα

αἱματόεντ': ἄλλοι δὲ περίδραμον υἷες Ἀχαιῶν,
οἳ καὶ θηήσαντο φυὴν καὶ εἶδος ἀγητὸν
Ἕκτορος: οὐδ' ἄρα οἵ τις ἀνουτητί γε παρέστη.
ὧδε δέ τις εἴπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον:
ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ μαλακώτερος ἀμφαφάασθαι
Ἕκτωρ ἢ ὅτε νῆας ἐνέπρησεν πυρὶ κηλέῳ.

ὣς ἄρα τις εἴπεσκε καὶ οὐτήσασκε παραστάς.

With this, Achilles drew his bronze-tipped spear from the corpse and laid it down, and as he began to strip the blood-stained armour from Hector's shoulders he was joined by others of the Greeks, who ran to gaze at Hector's size and wondrous form. Yet all who approached struck the body a blow, and turning to a comrade, one said: 'See, Hector is sure softer to handle now than when he set fire to the ships.' So saying, he would pierce the corpse, standing beside it.[11]

Again, I don't think it takes a wild imagination to see erotic overtones here, nor in the notorious actions of Achilles afterward, binding the body, and dragging it behind his chariot in full view of his native city, his handsome head lying in the dust. Some painters, ancient and more recent, have sensed it as well.

ἦ ῥα, καὶ Ἕκτορα δῖον ἀεικέα μήδετο ἔργα.
ἀμφοτέρων μετόπισθε ποδῶν τέτρηνε τένοντε
ἐς σφυρὸν ἐκ πτέρνης, βοέους δ' ἐξῆπτεν ἱμάντας,
ἐκ δίφροιο δ' ἔδησε, κάρη δ' ἕλκεσθαι ἔασεν:
ἐς δίφρον δ' ἀναβὰς ἀνά τε κλυτὰ τεύχε' ἀείρας
μάστιξέν ῥ' ἐλάαν, τὼ δ' οὐκ ἀέκοντε πετέσθην.
τοῦ δ' ἦν ἑλκομένοιο κονίσαλος, ἀμφὶ δὲ χαῖται
κυάνεαι πίτναντο, κάρη δ' ἅπαν ἐν κονίῃσι
κεῖτο πάρος χαρίεν: τότε δὲ Ζεὺς δυσμενέεσσι
δῶκεν ἀεικίσσασθαι ἑῇ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.

'So saying, he devised shame for the godly Hector. He pierced the tendons of both feet behind from heel to ankle, and through them fitted ox-hide thongs, tying them to his chariot, leaving the corpse's head to drag. Then lifting the glorious armour aboard, he mounted and drove the horses with his whip, and they eagerly leapt forward. Dragged behind, Hector's corpse raised a cloud of dust, while his outspread hair flowed, black, on either side. That

> head, once lovely, lay in the dust, since Zeus granted to his enemies to shame his corpse on his own native soil. [12]

Achilles keeps possession of Hector's body for twelve days, continuing to defile it. His passionate attention to the body has the nature of a perverse, or reverse love affair, so fixated is he. In fact, the later story of Achilles and Penthesilea seems created as a commentary on the Hector episode. After killing the queen of the Amazons he falls in love – great timing – and cherishes her body; it's the same story in reverse image. And so Priam in the final book is forced to come and humble himself, clasping and kissing he hands of Achilles and offering a splendid price for the body of his son.

The scene consummates the absolute dominant position of Achilles, a fitting end to a work that has derived much of its visceral power from its depictions of dominance over the lives and bodies of others. I've suggested throughout that these depictions are subtly sexualized, such a theme seems strongest in archaic combat dominated by duels, where the analogy with courtship and sexual congress is much more immediate, but traces of it emerge here and there in later periods. I've also suggested that we might see in the Iliad the first expressions of a concept that would become a cultural commonplace among the ancient Greeks, the belief that their own valor and manhood greatly surpassed that of the softer Asian peoples (though there considerable controversy concerning the degree to which ethnic consciousness is present in Homer).

This relation between erotic and martial pursuit is found in many other places than Homer, of course, and I'll close with a tenuous suggestion. If, due to its biological origins in our mating habits or whatever else, we experience something in successful belligerence that's related to erotic satisfaction, if that part of our psyche resonates sympathetically with martial conquest, that may help to explain the persistence of war in human life, despite so many efforts to forestall it. It doesn't have a cause, rather as Homer so often seems to hint, it's woven through nature.

Notes

[1] Homer, *Iliad* 24.27-30; all translations are by the author.
[2] 3.38-45
[3] 3.446
[4] 3.448-50

[5] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1625-6
[6] Homer, *Iliad* 3.1-9:

> αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κόσμηθεν ἅμ' ἡγεμόνεσσιν ἕκαστοι,
> Τρῶες μὲν κλαγγῇ τ' ἐνοπῇ τ' ἴσαν ὄρνιθες ὡς
> ἠΰτε περ κλαγγὴ γεράνων πέλει οὐρανόθι πρό:
> αἵ τ' ἐπεὶ οὖν χειμῶνα φύγον καὶ ἀθέσφατον ὄμβρον
> κλαγγῇ ταί γε πέτονται ἐπ' ὠκεανοῖο ῥοάων
> ἀνδράσι Πυγμαίοισι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φέρουσαι:
> ἠέριαι δ' ἄρα ταί γε κακὴν ἔριδα προφέρονται.
> οἳ δ' ἄρ' ἴσαν σιγῇ μένεα πνείοντες Ἀχαιοὶ
> ἐν θυμῷ μεμαῶτες ἀλεξέμεν ἀλλήλοισιν.
>
> When each were marshalled together under their leaders, the Trojans advanced with cries and clamor like birds, as when there is a clamor of cranes in the sky, when, fleeing winter and unending rain, they fly with a clamor towards the streams of Ocean, bearing death and destruction to Pygmy tribes, and they bring woeful strife at break of day. But the Achaeans came on in silence, breathing fury, eager in their heart to defend one another.

[7] *Iliad* 4.427-38:

> ὣς τότ' ἐπασσύτεραι Δαναῶν κίνυντο φάλαγγες
> νωλεμέως πόλεμον δέ: κέλευε δὲ οἷσιν ἕκαστος
> ἡγεμόνων: οἳ δ' ἄλλοι ἀκὴν ἴσαν, οὐδέ κε φαίης
> τόσσον λαὸν ἕπεσθαι ἔχοντ' ἐν στήθεσιν αὐδήν,
> σιγῇ δειδιότες σημάντορας: ἀμφὶ δὲ πᾶσι
> τεύχεα ποικίλ' ἔλαμπε, τὰ εἱμένοι ἐστιχόωντο.
> Τρῶες δ', ὥς τ' ὄϊες πολυπάμονος ἀνδρὸς ἐν αὐλῇ
> μυρίαι ἑστήκασιν ἀμελγόμεναι γάλα λευκὸν
> ἀζηχὲς μεμακυῖαι ἀκούουσαι ὄπα ἀρνῶν,
> ὣς Τρώων ἀλαλητὸς ἀνὰ στρατὸν εὐρὺν ὀρώρει:
> οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἦεν ὁμὸς θρόος οὐδ' ἴα γῆρυς,
> ἀλλὰ γλῶσσα μέμικτο, πολύκλητοι δ' ἔσαν ἄνδρες.
>
> So the Danaan battalions moved rank on rank remorselessly into battle; each captain commanded his men, while they advanced in silence; you would have said so great a host had no voice in their breast, since they feared their generals; the inlaid armour

> gleamed on all, and girded with it they marched on. But the Trojan war-cry rose through all the wide host, like the endless bleating of countless ewes in a rich man's yard, there to yield their white milk, when they hear the cries of their lambs, for the Trojan army, gathered from many lands, lacked a common language, speaking a myriad tongues.

[8] I will quote the entire passage here for all subsequent references:

. . .δάμασσε δέ μιν μεμαῶτα.
καὶ τοὺς μὲν λίπεν αὖθι ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων
στήθεσι παμφαίνοντας, ἐπεὶ περίδυσε χιτῶνας:
αὐτὰρ ὃ βῆ Ἴσόν τε καὶ Ἄντιφον ἐξεναρίξων
υἷε δύω Πριάμοιο νόθον καὶ γνήσιον ἄμφω
εἰν ἑνὶ δίφρῳ ἐόντας: ὃ μὲν νόθος ἡνιόχευεν,
Ἄντιφος αὖ παρέβασκε περικλυτός: ὥ ποτ' Ἀχιλλεὺς
Ἴδης ἐν κνημοῖσι δίδη μόσχοισι λύγοισι,
ποιμαίνοντ' ἐπ' ὄεσσι λαβών, καὶ ἔλυσεν ἀποίνων.
δὴ τότε γ' Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
τὸν μὲν ὑπὲρ μαζοῖο κατὰ στῆθος βάλε δουρί,
Ἄντιφον αὖ παρὰ οὖς ἔλασε ξίφει, ἐκ δ' ἔβαλ' ἵππων.
σπερχόμενος δ' ἀπὸ τοῖιν ἐσύλα τεύχεα καλὰ
γιγνώσκων: καὶ γάρ σφε πάρος παρὰ νηυσὶ θοῇσιν
εἶδεν, ὅτ' ἐξ Ἴδης ἄγαγεν πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς.
ὡς δὲ λέων ἐλάφοιο ταχείης νήπια τέκνα
ῥηϊδίως συνέαξε λαβὼν κρατεροῖσιν ὀδοῦσιν
ἐλθὼν εἰς εὐνήν, ἁπαλόν τέ σφ' ἦτορ ἀπηύρα:
ἢ δ' εἴ πέρ τε τύχῃσι μάλα σχεδόν, οὐ δύναταί σφι
χραισμεῖν: αὐτὴν γάρ μιν ὑπὸ τρόμος αἰνὸς ἱκάνει:
καρπαλίμως δ' ἤϊξε διὰ δρυμὰ πυκνὰ καὶ ὕλην
σπεύδουσ' ἱδρώουσα κραταιοῦ θηρὸς ὑφ' ὁρμῆς:
ὣς ἄρα τοῖς οὔ τις δύνατο χραισμῆσαι ὄλεθρον
Τρώων, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπ' Ἀργείοισι φέβοντο.

αὐτὰρ ὃ Πείσανδρόν τε καὶ Ἱππόλοχον μενεχάρμην
υἱέας Ἀντιμάχοιο δαΐφρονος, ὅς ῥα μάλιστα
χρυσὸν Ἀλεξάνδροιο δεδεγμένος ἀγλαὰ δῶρα
οὐκ εἴασχ' Ἑλένην δόμεναι ξανθῷ Μενελάῳ,
τοῦ περ δὴ δύο παῖδε λάβε κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
εἰν ἑνὶ δίφρῳ ἐόντας, ὁμοῦ δ' ἔχον ὠκέας ἵππους:

ἐκ γάρ σφεας χειρῶν φύγον ἡνία σιγαλόεντα,
τὼ δὲ κυκηθήτην: ὃ δ' ἐναντίον ὦρτο λέων ὡς
Ἀτρείδης: τὼ δ' αὖτ' ἐκ δίφρου γουναζέσθην:
ζώγρει Ἀτρέος υἱέ, σὺ δ' ἄξια δέξαι ἄποινα:
πολλὰ δ' ἐν Ἀντιμάχοιο δόμοις κειμήλια κεῖται
χαλκός τε χρυσός τε πολύκμητός τε σίδηρος,
τῶν κέν τοι χαρίσαιτο πατὴρ ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα,
εἰ νῶϊ ζωοὺς πεπύθοιτ' ἐπὶ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.

ὣς τώ γε κλαίοντε προσαυδήτην βασιλῆα
μειλιχίοις ἐπέεσσιν: ἀμείλικτον δ' ὄπ' ἄκουσαν:
εἰ μὲν δὴ Ἀντιμάχοιο δαΐφρονος υἱέες ἐστόν,
ὅς ποτ' ἐνὶ Τρώων ἀγορῇ Μενέλαον ἄνωγεν
ἀγγελίην ἐλθόντα σὺν ἀντιθέῳ Ὀδυσῆϊ
αὖθι κατακτεῖναι μηδ' ἐξέμεν ἂψ ἐς Ἀχαιούς,
νῦν μὲν δὴ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀεικέα τίσετε λώβην.

ἦ, καὶ Πείσανδρον μὲν ἀφ' ἵππων ὦσε χαμᾶζε
δουρὶ βαλὼν πρὸς στῆθος: ὃ δ' ὕπτιος οὔδει ἐρείσθη.
Ἱππόλοχος δ' ἀπόρουσε, τὸν αὖ χαμαὶ ἐξενάριξε
χεῖρας ἀπὸ ξίφεϊ τμήξας ἀπό τ' αὐχένα κόψας,
ὅλμον δ' ὣς ἔσσευε κυλίνδεσθαι δι' ὁμίλου.

‘Thus the king slew him in his rush. Then Agamemnon, lord of men, stripping them of their tunics, left them there, their breasts gleaming white, and went to kill Isus and Antiphus, sons of Priam, one a bastard, the other a legitimate son, who shared a chariot. Noble Antiphus, the legitimate son, stood up to fight, while Isus took the reins. Achilles had once captured the pair and bound them with willow-shoots as they herded sheep on the slopes of Ida, then set them free for a ransom. But now, imperial Agamemnon, son of Atreus, struck Isus on the breast with his spear just above the nipple, while his sword pierced Antiphus beside the ear and knocked him from the chariot. Quickly he stripped away their shining armour, recognising them from the day when swift-footed Achilles had brought them down from Ida to the swift ships. As a doe, though she is nearby, fails to defend her fawns when a lion forces her lair, seizes them in his mighty jaws, and robs them of tender life, trembling instead with fear and running sweat-drenched through dense undergrowth, fleeing from her powerful enemy’s attack, so the Trojans failed to save these two from death, driven themselves to flight by the Greeks.

Then the king slew Peisander and steadfast Hippolochus, sons of shrewd Antimachus, who hoping for glorious gifts and gold as a bribe from Paris was loudest to oppose restoring Helen to yellow-haired Menelaus. Now, it was his two sons whom Agamemnon captured, riding together in a chariot. They tried to contain the swift horses, but the gleaming reins slipped from their grasp, and they were stricken with panic. Atreides sprang on them like a lion, while the pair begged for mercy: 'Take us alive, son of Atreus, and win a noble ransom. Much treasure lies in Antimachus' house, gold, bronze and iron, finely wrought. Antimachus will grant you a princely ransom it you keep us alive by the Greek ships.'

Placatory were their tearful words to the king, but implacable his reply: 'If you are truly the offspring of that shrewd wretch Antimachus, who when Menelaus came as ambassador, with godlike Odysseus, to address the Trojan council, suggested they should not let him return, but should kill him on the spot, then you must pay the price now for his vile words then.'

So saying, he struck Peisander in the chest with his spear sending him flying backwards from the chariot to the earth. Though Hippolochus leapt down, he killed him on the ground, and culling his limbs and head with his sword sent him rolling through the ranks like a rounded boulder.'

[9] Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 1001-6
[10] Homer, *Iliad* 22.337-43
[11] *Iliad* 22.337-43
[12] *Iliad* 22.395-404

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